Soon the number of families increased to 260, and in the spring of 1915 work on the first part of the combination church and school building was started. The sounds of construction filled the summer air at the corner of 44th and Fairfield, yet, just a few blocks away, where the Gunsaulus School now stands, gypsies still pitched their camp and played their haunting music.

The one story building was blessed on October 17, 1915. It consisted of the temporary church, two classrooms and small living quarters for the pastor. The same day two babies were baptized, Anna Victoria Krauciunas and Anna Theodora Atkocaitis. Anna Krauciunas is today Sister M. Dilecta of the Sisters of Saint Casimir, serving God in the missions of Argentina. The marriage of Francis Macauskis and Antonia Bazilius was also blessed on this day. The first funeral in the new church was that of four month old Alfonsa Olsauksas on October 21, 1915.

In 1916, the Immaculate Conception School opened with two lay teachers in charge, Misses Virbilas and Rimkus. The second and third graders occupied one classroom, while the pupils of the fourth through the eighth grades were taught in the other. One hundred and ten students attended the new school.

About a thousand souls belonged to the parish. The active organizations were the Knights of Lithuania, Temperance Society and the Parish Choir. The organist was Mr. Romuald Barstis. He replaced Mr. August Saldukas, the first organist. The debt on the parish property at this time was approximately $42,000.00.

The year 1917 was one of expansion. School enrollment was increased to 221, and now there were four lay teachers. A small 30′ by 30′ dance pavilion was built where the sanctuary of the new church now stands.

In the open hall, the parishioners gathered during the summer months for dances, bazaars, carnivals, picnics and concerts. In later years the pavilion was enlarged and enclosed to serve as the parish hall. It was used for meetings, parish suppers and even as a gym for the children. Members of the parish still recall fondly


The Original Parish Hall in 1917


"The Old Barn"
Replaces The Dance Pavillion

Laikinosios Bažnyčios Ir Mokyklos Statyba.

Bažnyčios statyba buvo pradėta 1915 m. pavasarį ir jau tų pačių metų rudenį buvo pastatyta primoji dalis, t.y. bažnyčia, mokyklos pirmas aukštas ir klebonui butas. Tai buvo 168 iš 68 pėdų pastatas. Bažnyčia buvo pašventinta 1915 m. spalio mėn. 17 d. Antras mokyklos aukštas buvo pastatytas 1920 m. pradžioje.

Šioje bažnyčioje pirmas kūdikis buvo pakrikštytas Ona-Viktorija Kriaučiunas, pakrikštyta 1915 m. spalio mėn. 17 d. Tėvai: Andrius Kriaučiunas ir Ona Teškerskaitė. Dabar šv. Kazimiero seselė Dilecta.

Pirmieji sutuokti buvo Macauskis Pranas su Antania Baziulyte. Susituokė 1915 m. spalio mėn. 17 d.

Pirmoji palaidota buvo Alfonsa Olšauskaite 4 mėn. amž. palaidota 1915 m. spalio 21 d.

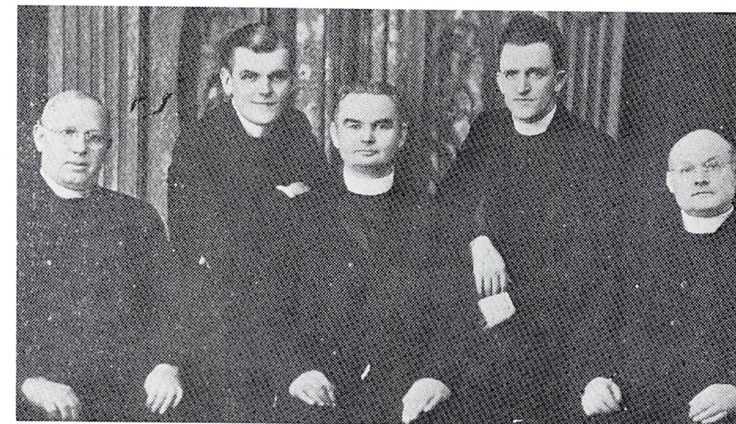
Padidejus parapijiečiu skaičiui, atsirado būtinas reikalas bažnyčią padidinti. Tai buvo atlikta 1937 m. Bažnyčia buvo padidinta taip, kad galėjo tilpti 300 žmonių daugiau.

Parapijos Sale.

Pradžioje buvo pastatytas mažas pavilijonas, bet ilgainiui šis pavilijonas buvo perdirbtas į didele parapijos salę su scena ir virtuvę, kuri buvo naudojama susirinkimams parapijos vakarienems, koncertams, vaidinimams. šokiams ir mūsu mokyklos vaikų sportui.

Vienuolyno Statyba.

Prieš vienuolyno pastatyma seseles mokytojos gyveno 4419 So. Fairfield Av. nuomojamuose iš Vitkausko namuose. Vienuolynas buvo pradėtas statyti 1925 m. ir užbaigtas 1926 m. gale.


The pastor with first curates, L to R — Rev. Saulinskas, Rev. Valancius, Rev. Briszko, Rev. Jonelis, Rev. Vaitukaitis.

the school programs and theatrical productions of various groups and organizations that were staged within the wooden walls.

In 1918, four Sisters of Nazareth took charge of the school, and the number of students rose to 306. The sisters then lived in a rented house at 4419 South Fairfield. Since more classrooms were needed, a second story was added to the school in 1920. By this time there were six sisters teaching 422 pupils.

The year 1922 brought important changes. Father Joseph Saulinskas was appointed to help Father Briszko with the parish work . . . The school was placed under the direction of eight Sisters of St. Casimir. Four classrooms were added as the number of pupils increased to 501.

On October 25, 1925, ground was broken for a new convent. Construction was completed the following year, and twelve sisters moved into one of the best planned and well built convents of that time. During the same year Mr. Justas Kudirka replaced Mr. Stanley Zylius as organist.

Father Briszko now turned his attention to building a new rectory. Work began in 1926 and was finished in 1927 without any additional parish debt. That same summer Father Saulinskas was transferred, and Father Francis Vaitukaitis took his place. Zealously interested in promoting vocations, Father Vaitukaitis is best remembered for the encouragement and guidance he gave to many young ladies who entered religious life with his aid.

In 1930, the newly ordained Father A. Valancius came to the parish, and the next year, another young priest, Father Stanley Jonelis, took the place of Father Vaitukaitis. The two energetic assistants used their many talents to interest and draw young people into parochial activities and organizations, thus helping them through the trying depression years.

Despite the hard times prevailing then, the parish debt was paid off in 1931, and the mortgage papers were burned. The parish continued to grow and prosper.

Jis buvo pastatytas parapijiečių aukomis, be skolu. Jo statybai šeimos aukojo po $20. Tai buvo vienas gražiausiu ir patogiausių seserų namų anais laikais iš visų buvusių lietuvių kolonijų Amerikoje.

Klebonijos Statyba.

Klebonija pradėta statyti 1926 m. ir užbaigta 1927 m. Ji pasižymi stilingumu ir anais laikais buvo gražiausias pastatas visoje apylinkėje ir patogiausia iš visu lietuvių koloniju klebonijų šiame krašte. Ji pastatyta parapijiečiu aukomis, be skolų. Jos statybai šeimos aukojo po $15.

Pasiektas Tikslas.

Dievui gausiai laiminant, į ši laisves krašta iš Lietuvos atvykusiu paprastų, neturtingų, be didesnio išsilavinimo, bet gilaus tikejimo ir Dieva nuoširdžiai mylinčiu žmonių darbu, pastangomis beiaukomis, vadovaujant energingam, visa siela pasiaukojusiam, geram organizatoriui kun. A. Brškai, čia išaugo graži lietuvių parapija. Kur anksčiau buvo tušti laukai, gatvės be grindinio ir be šaligatviu, — išaugo graži jauki bažnyčia, mokykla, dideli ir patogūs seselių namai su koplyčia, stilinga ir puošni klebonija ir erdvi salė. Visa parapijos nuosavybė aptverta masyvia 6-iu pėdū aukščio geležine tvora. Visos parapijos skolos /mortgage/ buvo išmokėtos 1931 m. Tai buvo Dievui padėkos diena ir parapijiečiams didelio džiaugsmo diena. Tam džiaugsmo ivykiui atžymėti buvo surengtos nepaprastos iškilmės.


The first graduates were L to R — Frank Juskiewicz (now Rev.), M. Macas, Teacher — M Virbilas, S. Pieza (now Religious editor for Chicago's American), A. Jovois and C. Kriksciunas.